The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

EDITORS: JOSEPH WOOD and JAMES CROSSLEY.

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The Auld Fisher.

There was an auld fisher, he sat by the wa',
An' luikit oot ower the sea;
The bairnies war playin', he smilit on them a',
But the tear stude in his e'e.
An' it's oh to win awa', awa',
An' it's oh to win awa',
Whaur the bairns come hame, and the wives they bide,
An' God is the father o' a'!

Jocky an' Jeamy an' Tammy, oot there,
A' i' the boatie gaed doon;
An' I'm ower auld to fish ony mair,
An' I hinna the chance to droon!
An' it's oh to win awa', awa'! etc.

An' Jeanie, she grat to ease her hert,
An' she easit hersel' awa';
But I'm ower auld for the tears to stert,
An' sae the sighs maun blaw.
An' it's oh to win awa', awa'! etc.

Lord, steer me hame whaur my Lord has steerit,
For I'm tired o' life's rockin' sea;
An' dinna be lang, for I'm nearhan fearit,
'At I'm 'maist ower auld to dee.
An' it's oh to win awa', awa'! etc.

Triolet.

I'm a puir man, I grant,
But I am weel neeboured;
And nane shall me daunt,
Though a puir man, I grant,
For I shall not want—
The Lord is my shepherd.
I'm a puir man, I grant,
But I am weel neeboured.

GEORGE MACDONALD.

The Best Uses of Sunday.

The observance of one day in seven as a day of rest and worship can be supported and enforced on grounds eminently reasonable. Not one of our institutions rests on a basis more natural, and therefore more sacred. It existed before the Mosaic law; Moses only adopted and adapted it. It is from Nature; and Nature to the religious man is just another name for the God who is in all and through all. Stripped of its later and Jewish additions the Fourth Commandment is not obsolete. The moral principle which it expresses is of permanent obligation. It is the reflection of a law written on the physical and spiritual constitution of mankind, and clearly and impressively confirmed by many centuries of human experience. The Sunday is its own sufficient justification. The Divine ground for its observance is to be found in its necessity and usefulness. Man's great and permanent needs announce the will of his Maker.

Jesus Christ, it is true, ever sought to deliver the Sabbath-law from the accretions which had gathered round it, and manifested no sympathy with the narrow and servile observance of it which found favour even with the better people of His time; yet in his life and teaching there is nothing which, fairly interpreted, would lead us to suppose that He did not value highly the day of rest. He would, as the Guide and Master of those who seek to live by the spirit, have men observe the day of rest, not as the slaves, but as the free children of His Father. He placed its observance on a universal basis,—not on a six

days' creation, or on the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, but on the deep and unchanging needs of human nature and life. "The Sabbath,' He said, "is made for man." Man is his own enemy when he neglects it, or seeks to destroy it. One need not be a Sabbatarian, only a lover of his kind to fight against every influence that would weaken natural respect or reverence for the day of rest. The Lord's day is pre-eminently man's day.

The need of physical rest is the original idea of the day. This is an aspect of it which ought never to be overlooked. Body and brain need occasional relief from work and care. Regularly recurring seasons of rest have become more and more a necessity as civlisation has advanced. One day in seven is none too much. Work on Sunday is mistaken economy. Both the tired muscles and the tired nerves claim their Sabbath. If the claim is not allowed, then very dreadful penalties of a natural kind will be sure to follow. Our physical, as well as our moral life, has its Divine order, and on being reconciled to it our general well-being depends.

But rest is not all that we need. We need refreshment. Refreshment is rest. Our faculties are rested by whatever truly and nobly refreshes them. The best rest is not that which comes of inaction and lethargy, but of simple change of engagements and activities. How do you spend your Sunday? Let not selfishness and self indulgence make you neglect its pure and helpful uses. Do not surrender it to worldly ambition and greed. Do not run after base excitements. Dissipation is neither rest nor refreshment. Seek the change you need among scenes and companions and books whose influence will raise and purify your mind and spirit. Even though places of worship may have for you no attraction, you ought still to keep Sunday sacred to things pure, lovely, and of good report. The best blessings of life are not all in the churches and their forms. The Kingdom of God is larger than the Church. Like the love of God it is over all. Many are the keys to it. Some of them every man possesses or may possess. Intelligent and reverent sympathy with Nature is one key. The man who has it inherits the earth. The sky, the sea, the hills lift him nearer heaven. "The meanest flower that blows" gives him, as Wordsworth says, "the thoughts that lie too deep for tears." To have a mind and heart open to the impressions of the natural universe is to be at the secret source of many a noble pleasure. Your life with Nature may be full of beauty and joy; it may be life with God. The love of literature and art may be another key to the kingdom of the Father. Sunday may be used as a time for reading and re-reading those books which lift us into the atmosphere of great ideas and make us conscious of a higher and wider world. If the supreme test of inspiration be the power to inspire, then how many inspiring books are at our constant command—books which stimulate the truer and deeper self, and quicken and nourish all best thoughts and feelings.

Some part of the Sunday ought to be given to renewing and strengthening the bonds of love and friendship. Our finest feelings need the kindliest care. Family attachments are not things which may be left to themselves Our social affections as well as our intellectual powers demand, in order to be kept healthy and beautiful, large and constant culture. Let Sunday be a day when the family communion table is spread. Let it be a day of gladness in the home. The pervading influences of the home may be joyous and bright, and yet earnest and religious. The God we serve is not a lover of gloom, of pharisaical droning and long-faced idleness. The dim light is not the most religious light; nor the funereal countenance the most religious countenance. God (in the words of an old religious teacher) is the "Father of lights and everlasting glee." We may, as the familiar psalm puts it, "Serve Him with mirth."

Let the Sunday also be a day of brotherly kindness and human service. Love of men and women is better than love of hills and flowers. We may get more help from association and sympathy with our fellows than from association and sympathy with nature. Humanity is the most Divine thing we know. The Son of Man is the Son of God. God and Christ and Man are of one nature. The best worship of God will inspire the best love and service of man. Are we not all brothers and sisters—children of one Father? Let one hour at least of our Sunday leisure be spent in doing good to others. Let us forget our private and even our domestic

cares in remembering God's larger world. The rest of God, the perfect peace and blessedness will never be found by us if we live a life that is self-centred and self-enclosed. We gain more from what we give than from what we receive. Through the cross of self-surrender to the service of the Divine will, we enter into the joy of the Lord. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God."

The Sunday, above all, is a necessity of man's moral and spiritual life. Apart from its ecclesiastical purposes, it may be a very holy day; a day for the soul to rise above the body, the spirit above sense, conscience above circumstance and expediency; a day for long and lonely meditation on the facts and truths of the moral and religious life; a day to escape from the dimming, blinding mists of the valley into the clear air of higher thoughts and affections. Man cannot live by bread alone. He requires the inspirations of religion to give wings and feet to his human ideals of justice and brotherly love and service. His life in all its noblest movements and attitudes and experiences becomes conscious of some uplifting and hallowing sense of Divine realities. The Sunday, as a season of meditation on the higher and deeper things of life, was always needed; it is needed now more than ever.

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.

What religion calls 'worldliness'—the life which is only responsive to the calls of business and the claims of pleasure is a real danger. It is ever threatening to break and crush out all the purest ideals and aspirations of mankind. Amid the crowd of common cares we forget that we are spirits, and that we belong to two worlds. We need Sunday to bring us to ourselves.

> Our sacred selves! Have we
> No charge to keep o'er this divinity
> That lives within us?

Absorption in one kind of life may cause other kinds to die out. Spiritual atrophy is at least a possibility. The spiritual perceptions can only be won and kept by cultivation. Disuse means decay and death. How much scepticism and unbelief is simply the scepticism of neglected souls and the unbelief of hardened hearts? Given over to selfish pursuits and cultivating every side of their nature but that which speaks of God, men complain that they have no open vision. The cause is in themselves. They are not prepared to see. They have no data for spiritual conviction.

Let us in this matter of Sunday observance stand and walk in the old paths. They are, after all, the paths of progress. The persistent efforts of faithful souls through many dark and troubled ages have given us this day. Let us hold against all comers the costly gains of history. Let us enter into the labours of our fathers and carry them on to ideal completeness. To go back here is to go downward. Let us preserve and use the Sunday in the interests of the higher life.

I plead for attendance upon public workship as one of the best uses of Sunday. I urge it not as a matter of professional prejudice or personal preference; but on the ground that it is an institution vitally related to individual and social well-being.

I do not insist, of course, upon attendance on public worship apart from those natural conditions on which edification depends. The real problem for our religous leaders is not how to increase church attendance, but how to make church attendance attractive and profitable in all honest and best ways. Our religious services are still too much based on what was good for people a century ago. They are narrower than the life they seek to quicken and help.

But, notwithstanding all our differences, we have the same deep needs as our fathers had. We must have our seasons for solitary meditation; but solitary worship is not enough. We are social beings. We cannot reach the highest and best each one for himself. We need the contact of mind with mind, and heart with heart, to quicken and intensify all best thoughts and feelings. Every sentiment of our nature grows and deepens in society. The same is true of the religious sentiments. Besides, religion itself is a bond which unites us not only to God, but to all God's children. Communion with others is not only a necessity of our nature but a necessity of our religious life. The spiritual instincts are social. We cannot keep the joy of the Lord to ourselves. They who have all things in common must have a common outlet for their thanksgiving and aspiration. It

is not enough, then, to worship in private or in the fields. "The tabernacle of God is with men." There is a blessing where two or three are met together which cannot be found by one. An inspiration belongs to the great congregation which does not belong to us as separate individuals. The power of sympathy is a real power. It is part of the Divine help. The Divine help often comes to us through the medium of human help.

But this is not all. Has anyone in a world like this, where the weak and the strong are bound together, any right simply to consider whether he alone can live his life and do his work without the help of the institutions of religion? How about others? Men have never been able to live a noble life out of doing as they pleased. We are under obligations to society.

JOHN HUNTER.

Solitude.

There is a world unseen of Vulture's eye—
A world where foot of man hath never trod,
A solitude which none invades but God
As erst He came to lonely Sinai.
None hear the litanies oft chanted there,
The penitential vow, the swelling psalm,
Or now the melodies of sweetest calm,
And now the battle cries that fill the air.

A world of stillness, as of quiet death;
A world of labour, as of fullest life,
In which a thousand passions play their part,
With less report of noise than noiseless breath;
Where faith and hope and love hide from the strife,
And sometimes droop and die—*a man's own heart!*

SHIRLEY KING.

Sayings from George Eliot.

Fruit is seed.

One must be poor to know the luxury of giving.

Nettle seed needs no digging.

Pity the laden one; wandering woe may visit you and me.

We can hardly learn humility and tenderness enough except by suffering.

The tale of Divine Pity was never yet believed from lips that were not felt to be moved by human pity.

A Round Table Conference.

AN EXTENDED LECTIONARY.

I.

I think, notwithstanding my religious Radicalism, there is a large amount of Conservatism in my nature. Though many changes have commended themselves to my judgment I have made them slowly. and with a sense of reluctancy. When they have proved themselves to be advantageous my Conservative feelings have gathered about and protected them. Especially in matters pertaining to Religion, though I have ever been classed among the Progressives, my tastes and predilections have always been favourable to what is old and has the sanction of usage and tradition. The venerable, the stately, and the orderly always appeal strongly to me. I like an ancient service, and I find fulness of meanings in words that have come down to us through the centuries Even archaisms and solecisms have an attraction for me. They tell so much, and they suggest so much more.

When the idea first came into my mind that other words than those of the Hebrew Scriptures, Old and New, should be used in our religious services, I was startled, and almost offended. There was sacrilege in the idea. Clinging to me was the traditionalism of the past. These Scriptures were unique. Nowhere else in the world's literature was there such fulness of inspiration, and no words could so truly be described as the Words of God. Besides, they were so rich and varied. So many of the moods and tenses, the longings and aspirations, the sufferings and triumphs of humanity were reflected in them, that to set them aside, even occasionally, seemed to be to miss a feast of fat things and to turn away from the golden treasure-house. There was not only so much in the words themselves, and in the messages they brought from the men and women of many centuries, but so much could be put into them. New parables grew out of the old words. Modern thought could be revealed in ancient speech The life of to-day could be made to gleam through the venerable Scriptures, as the white light of God could stream though the

richly dight windows of an ancient cathedral. I was, for a while, unwilling to make any change.

But a change came in this wise. First I began to find that, however ample and varied these ancient Hebrew books were, they did not fully reflect the marvellous diversity in the moods and tenses of mankind to-day. The world had grown more complex. The necessities and hurries of modern life had developed a variety and amplitude of needs, feelings, yearnings, and gropings which were unknown in Eastern lands long centuries ago. And I began to discover that sometimes a glowing word from some living saint or martyr, some inspired poet, or overweighted toiler in the deeps of sin, thrilled an audience as no ancient words could do, and stirred up a moral glow and inspiration on which a superstructure of spiritual holiness could be built. And I wondered whether I was wise in excluding such words from the Lectionary of the day. And, next, I found myself hesitating as to whether it was wise to read new lessons and feelings into these old words? Was I not binding myself to an unreality, and trying to make ancient saints and sages teach lessons which they had never learnt? My critical judgment assured me that I ought not to make words mean what their speakers never intended to teach, and that there was always danger in putting new wine into old skins. The ingenuity of exposition and interpretation began to wake in me a sense of unreality and danger. And so I was led to look the matter of an extended Lectionary fairly in the face. My old Conservatism gave way, or grew into one which was more in harmony with the progressive spirit of the age. I asked no counsel. I never dreamt of conferring with my people as to whether I should vary our Bible readings with selections taken from other sources. I read such passages from time to time as commended themselves to me. As I did so I found people gradually taking a new interest in this part of our worship. I did not observe any less, but I think rather more, interest in my selections from the ancient Scriptures; but I found a deepening attention as I quoted living words from some great teacher of the day, or some old saints of the past whose culture lay outside the scope of Jew or Christian. My readings gradually became more varied, and, I believe, more attractive, until that feature of our services seemed to create a concentrated attention, and I may as well state at once that nowhere, either in England or Ireland, have I found either opposition to or disapproval of my extended Lectionary. At first there has been a startled sense of newness, and incongruity, but this has immediately worn away, and it has always been followed by a cordial approval of the new plan, and a recognition of its value as an enrichment of our religious services. This is my experience, extending over a period of nearly thirty years.

I do not find, as I have said above, that in thus extending the Lectionary I have lessened the value, or lowered the real rank of the ancient writings in our public services, but that the contrary is really the case. My selections now are followed with a keener interest than when I always read from the Bible, and the passages read are heard with more attention, and appreciated better than before. The old books are no longer a fetish, but a literature, and the words of thinker, poet, dramatist, or historian are more justly valued. And the new readings I select from the scriptures of other lands and people, from the writers who have enriched our own literature, and especially from modern poets, prophets, and thinkers have been listened to with such rapt attention that many times I have felt that in enlarging my own outlook into the manifold workings of the spirit of God in the minds and consciences of mankind I have, at the same time, promoted the literary and spiritual education of my hearers, as I could never have done by the old plan of Bible lessons and Bible expositions. On the whole I feel that we have lost nothing, while our gains are immense. The communion of the saints has been enlarged, the working of the Divine Spirit have been found more abundantly, the scope of religion has gone beyond a race into the broad field of humanity, and the sense of the sympathy of religions all the world over has been called forth among our worshippers.

Thus it is, that though my tastes, habits, and feelings were at first adverse to any extension of our Lectionary, I am now in the habit of making the literature of the world pay tribute in our services, and this without any detriment to the sacred things and books of the past, and to the

advantage of the moral and spiritual culture of all who gather together for worship. So once again I have discovered that a reverent Conservatism is in perfect harmony with a devout Radicalism.

JAMES C. STREET.

II.

As a mere matter of argument there is scarcely anything to be said against the plea for an extended Lectionary. For Liberal Christians, at any rate, no principle is at stake. To me the subject is one rather of sentiment and taste, of expediency and practicability. I have always favoured the introduction of anything and everything that tends to make a service more attractive and beautiful, as well as more helpful. But I know there is great prejudice in the minds of not a few of our people against any innovation whatsoever. Others there are who would welcome certain kinds of innovations. And there are others still, who, to be peculiar or to attract attention, would welcome any new departure suggested to them. I have always belonged to the middle-class, and, with Mr. Street, claim to be radical and conservative all in one. I would say, therefore, with the Rev. J. McGavin Sloan:—"Frankly do I concede to every congregation of worshippers the right, if it chooses to exercise the same, to limit the lessons in public worship to the Bible. . . . Nor would I wish for one moment to multiply the difficulties which beset us in our aggressive work. . . . As a matter of fact, wherever no principle is at stake, and the question is one of method only, I am heartily willing to subordinate my private ideals, or 'fads,' perhaps, to the wish and will of the majority, to whom at any time it may be my duty to preach." These words express my own feelings upon the matter better than anything I have hitherto read on the subject.

It is only once I have ever read lessons at a service which were not taken from the Bible, and that was when I preached a sermon on the death of Tennyson, the two lessons being then chosen from his "In Memoriam." But, at present, I should never dream of making a practice of so doing, and all the more because there happens to be no principle at stake; for whenever and wherever a principle is at stake, I hold the minister has no right to consult anyone but his own conscience; but where it is a matter of sentiment or taste, it is his duty, as Mr. Sloan says, to fall in with the wish of the majority. Men and women are attracted and repelled as much by matters of taste as by matters of principle. My feeling upon the matter is not to be aggressive at all, but to wait until the desire comes spontaneously from the congregation, rather than to thrust such a change as a surprise upon them. To me such experiments are somewhat risky. As a rule they are not indications of growth and strength, but more often of weakness, and tend to empty a church rather than fill it. Of course it may be said, as I have heard it said more than once, that ministers have a mission to break down barriers of prejudice against reading anything but the Bible, and that this is best done by taking a bold step and doing the thing straight away. Such prejudice, I venture to think, can be better broken down by first of all enlightening the people as to the real nature and growth of the Bible as revealed by the "Higher Criticism;" by lecturing upon other religions and their Bibles, and showing their kinship of spirit in many respects to our own. This process of widening and enlarging the view is first wanted. This might prepare the way for a gradual change, and therefore a safe change; and then if the desire should arise, as a result of wider knowledge, for a wider Lectionary, all well and good. I am not one who believes that direct and bold attack upon an old and cherished custom is the best method of destruction. The belief in witchcraft and in miracles was not killed, as has been shown by a great living historian, by the direct attacks upon it of clever men and smart writers, but by the general spread of knowledge, which commenced as far back as the Revival of Learning, and which goes on to-day. This knowledge has created a kind of mental climate in which the plants of superstition cannot possibly live. It is this general mental atmosphere that has killed them far more than the isolated blows of early heretics and sceptics. So with our subject. To be a healthy and strong and a beneficial change,—if the change is to "Come and stay,"—we must first create an intellectual atmosphere congenial to it. I dare say there is a great deal to be said against it on the score of

injudicious selections, and also of vain repetitions, as I find that, where ministers have extended their Lectionary, they very often read their old favourites over and over again, and the selection is generally a small one. It is, however, very evident that our present intellectual atmosphere is not yet favourable to the change, since it is so little practised amongst us, and is yet, a matter for discussion. I can't say that I am particularly anxious it should be otherwise, as I don't think it is altogether advantageous to be so completely absorbed in our present turmoil and troubles as to forget that we are linked to the past as well as to the present. Our present life can receive ample interpretation in our modern hymns, and in our preaching. We do not *expect* to find the Bible declaring itself upon our modern difficulties and trials, except in so far as those difficulties and trials are the same for all time, that is, are spiritual, and arising out of our relationship with God. It is well to be relieved sometimes from the stress of the present, and to feel that our spiritual life is not of mushroom growth. And the more I read and study the Bible in the light of the later learning, the more interesting and refreshing it grows; the more strengthening also, and quite as invigorating as any modern or ancient literature, if not more so; for the Bible is a peculiar literature, distinct from all others, born of a consciousness of constant relationship with God. It is distinctly religious in that sense, and on that account has borne the test of constant repetition better than any other literature perhaps could.

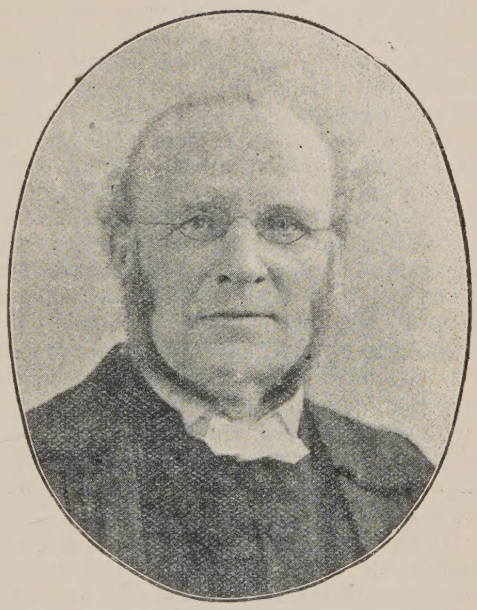
However, what I chiefly plead for is a certain amount of toleration in this matter towards our congregations. "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. Take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to the weak."

E. D. PRIESTLEY EVANS.

(To be continued in our next.)

Wrong sits crowned,
But not for ever; knowledge daily paves
The path for justice; and though yet afar,
She cometh.

Alfred Hayes.



An Interview with Dr. Brooke Herford.

Fitzjohns Avenue is reverently spoken of as the earthly paradise of our English artists. It is here they build themselves their lordly pleasure-houses; it is here they settle when they have made their pile, and to be admitted to the Fitzjohns set is the heaven of heavens to all young aspirants of the brush. It is therefore decidedly odd to find Dr. Herford planted down in the middle of this aristocratic Bohemia. But as a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, it may be that Dr. Herford's presence among them will gradually transform these R. A's., etc., into good Unitarians. Certainly his wonderful power of making friends with all sorts and conditions of men will open as many doors to him in Hampstead as in Boston. His charm of manner, his shrewd common sense, his wide sympathies, his varied knowledge of men and things, his simple direct earnestness, his unaffected manliness, admirably fit him to be the representative to cultured people of a rational faith. "Our Brooke," as he is lovingly called by thousands

of friends, is, in spite of 18 years' sojourn in America, a typical Englishman. His tall figure, his manly carriage, his massive head, his vigorous personality, seem to promise a long and successful career as a leader among us, in spite of his sixty years. No one can talk with him for five minutes without being struck by his practical turn of mind. Certainly, here is neither the mystic nor the devotee, but here is the earnest minister, the wise counsellor, the staunch friend, the devoted worker, and "the heart of childhood taken up and sustained in the power of manhood."

After a hearty greeting, all the more grateful as extended to a comparative stranger, we plunged at once into talk :—

"Now, Dr. Herford, where stands the Liberal movement to-day in our English Churches as compared with your experience before you went to America?"

"It seems to me that there has been an advance all along the line. The broader Theology is to-day more open and avowed in the Episcopalian and in the Dissenting churches Twenty years ago such a 'Summer School of Theology,' as assembled last year at Oxford, under the presidency of Dr. Fairbairn, would have been quite impossible."

"But is not the Broad Church a less influential party to-day than in Stanley's and Kingsley's time?"

"Yes, and no. There is more free Theology now—a far larger number of men are touched with the progressive spirit,—but as a separate party the Broad Church has almost ceased to exist. It is now part and parcel of the High Church party. Broad Churchmen, having, as a rule, adopted High Church ritual, are now lost in the dominant party. As a separate movement Broad Churchism is now confined to a few eccentrics like Haweis and Momerie. I don't feel able to speak so surely of the Broad movement in Dissent. No doubt it is extensive and growing, but it is marked by greater narrowness here than in America. While American churches are in the main orthodox, they are not so afraid of heretics as here."

"Do you mean in open and cordial fraternisation with Unitarians for instance?"

"That's so. The orthodox churches of America now generally acknowledge the Christian standing of Unitarian churches, and liberal men among their ministers often exchange services with ours. There was a Good Friday service in Boston in which men of all denominations took part, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Unitarians. Phillips Brooks gave great offence to some of his co-religionists by appearing there. Now that would be quite impossible in England."

"But has there been anything in America so significant of theological progress as our Summer School of Theology?"

"Why, certainly. You only borrowed the idea from them. To say nothing of Chatauqua, and other distinctly "Summer Schools," we Unitarians have had our Ministers' Institute alternating with our Biennial Conference, affording our men periodical opportunities of coming up to date on points of scholarship and criticism, as well as for discussing the practical and social side of ministerial work. These conferences have been addressed not only by our own men but by representatives of many other Churches—from the Jewish Rabbi to the Episcopalian dignitary, from the Ethical Culturist even to pronounced Evangelicals."

"Well, Dr. Herford, to change the subject and come home to nearer topics, you no doubt have noticed letters from time to time in the *Inquirer* insisting that the progressive movement in Theology involves the abandonment of the Christian name and position. Is that your opinion?"

"On the contrary—I hold there is no greater nonsense. Although I was one of the first, in the *Unitarian Herald* of thirty years ago, to protest against excluding a man from our fellowship who felt a difficulty in accepting the Christian name, and while I would have the door freely open so that Theists might feel themselves welcome, I see no reason in all the advances that have been made for giving up the Christian name. Those advances have made us more Christian not less so. It is only simple justice to our general position to say that our churches as a whole are deeply attached to the Christian faith, and they do right to claim place and recognition among the Christian Churches

of our time. I would hold out the right hand of fellowship to every Theist in our midst, but I entirely deny that our progressive Theology leads logically to the repudiation of the rock whence we were hewn."

"And what do you think of the spasmodic agitation for an extended Lectionary?"

"I never took any stock in that. I am for a much freer use of the Bible than is usual,—selecting and revising as you go along; but, in my judgment, we do well, as a rule, to keep within its limits. I can find nothing equal to it as a source of religious help and inspiration elsewhere; nothing that comes with quite the same weight of a long past. I remember when Moncure Conway published his 'Anthology,' I said to him, 'Why, Mr Conway, the best things in your book are from the Bible after all.' And he admitted that he felt it was so, himself, though he added that perhaps it might be on the same ground that we think our own mothers' faces the sweetest and the loveliest in all the world. They may not be that in themselves, but that is what they are to us.

"In coming back to us after 18 years' absence, and after a widely different experience in America, what do you think we have to learn from our brethren across the water as preachers and ministers?"

"Well, I should say, to begin with, a greater freedom and simplicity in prayer. I am astonished to come back and find three fourths of our ministers still *reading* prayers—a practice which is unknown in America. Of course some of our American churches have liturgical services, but I am referring to the written prayer which a minister offers in the place appointed for free prayer. The use of a partial liturgy is indeed becoming common in our American churches, but not to the omission of free prayer. I am sure our services would gain in earnestness and devotion if our men would discard the manuscript and trust more to the inspiration of the hour and place.

"Then, again, I think we have something to learn from American Churches in the matter of quicker and brighter worship. There is nothing of that measured and rather ponderous solemnity over there which we sometimes find on this side the water. The service is less formal and, as a rule, more to the point. The Americans feel themselves freer to depart from set 'orders of service.' Still, while pleading for more freedom in these matters, I admit that there is something in the habits of our people, and that many may not feel about these things as I do."

"And what are our prospects?"

"Our prospects depend on our faith. If we believed more in the day of great things that day would come all the sooner. I believe in making our thought known and in coming to the front—no more chapels in back streets—and in founding *churches*, not missions, except as every church worth its salt must always be a mission. Dub a place 'mission' when you start it and it will be a mission for ever. Call it a church and you give it a standing and its friends something permanent to work for. For instance, there is——" but here individual references began to come in, which, we promised our friend, wild horses should not draw from us.

A Country Muse.*

Here is a delightful volume from a poet, new we suspect, to many of our readers. Mr. Norman Gale can do more than bring "the scent of the hay across the footlights;" in the midst of stony streets and a wilderness of dreary brick he

> Can wellnigh make you hear again
> Birds warbling in a Surrey lane.

He is a healthy, cheerful poet, singing the praises of country life in a sweet, simple strain, quite refreshing to those whose souls dwell in the tents of Kedar, *i.e.*, the smoke and grime of cities. In reading this little book we feel the touch of a soft fresh wind untainted by the breath of sweating multitudes. At the same time there is something a little quaint, not to say of an eighteenth century flavour, about its "Colins and Clarindas," its "Strephon to Chloris," its "Cupid's pillage" and "Laura's eyes," names and images that bring up visions of Tunbridge Wells in the days of brocade and Sedan chairs rather than actual country life. Mr. Gale's real feeling for the country, however, breaks through these little artificialities of expression and transplants us into the fragrant air of woods and fields, where the birds chant

* *A Country Muse.* New Series, by Norman Gale.

their melodies undisturbed, and the waters lap the reeds with their metallic music.

In the roaring city
Sparrows' voices lend
Something of the country
To the hearts that spend
Season after season
There, and never hear
Blackbirds in the apple,
Blackbirds in the pear.

But my orchard yonder
Is an orchestra;
Birds and leaves and breezes
Wake in concert there,
Music of enchantment
Country folks may hear,
Lyrics in the palm tree,
Lyrics in the pear.

Matthew Arnold said of Wordsworth:

He laid us as we lay at birth,
On the cool flowery lap of earth.
Smiles broke from us and we had ease,
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain—
Our youth returned.

Of course it would not be true to say that Mr. Gale can sound as yet Wordsworth's deep universal note. Mr. Gale is a young man, and these lyrics are only the first-fruits of a genius full of the promise and potency of great things. Meantime, in common with Wordsworth, he can "lay us on the cool flowery lap of earth" and cause the weary heart to rejoice once again in the simplicities of nature. How much there is in the short creed he calls "The Country Faith."

Here in the country's heart,
Where the grass is green,
Life is the same sweet life
As it e'er hath been.

Trust in a God still lives,
And the bell at morn
Floats with a thought of God
O'er the rising corn.

God comes down in the rain,
And the crop grows tall—
This is the country faith
And the best for all.

The great Dr. Arnold complained that Warwickshire was so dull and flat and uninteresting. Certainly the country round Rugby cannot be called picturesque. But, listen to our poet singing the charms of "Leafy Warwickshire."

Why will your minds for ever go
To meads in sunny Greece?
Our song-birds have as fine a flow,
Our sheep as fair a fleece;
Among our hills the honey-bee,
And in the leaning pear;
I tell you there is Arcady
In leafy Warwickshire.

Apollo's in the winding lane!
And Cupid with his smile
Comes splendidly across the plain
To walk with us a mile.
The milkmaid's kiss, the country peace,
Delight us living here,
Content to traffic all of Greece
For leafy Warwickshire.

It is well also to note that Mr. Gale can strike a finer chord—a more solemn note. He boldly challenges the religion of our day.

Would Christ, if He were raised to-day, know Christ?
His creed's magnificent simplicity.

And in a lovely verse, speaking of the soul that is "not chained at custom's knee," he says:—

The Master is not only in the court
Where doves are sold and money changers cry;
Nor will He leave the country side untaught
If ears be open as He passes by.
In secret paths that thread the forest land
He waits to heal thee and divinely bless;
While from the hill, with voice and waving hand,
The Shepherd calls thee, child of loneliness.

Our poet has felt the questioning fervour of the age, and it is no small part of the interest of his "Country Muse" that it reveals an attempt to seek God at first hand in the life of nature, which if it does not rise here to the full-toned lyric of adoration, yet marshalls our steps in that direction.

Books for the Young.

In spite of the immense number of books issued from the Press year by year—perhaps because of it—there is great difficulty in deciding what to read. The publication of a book is no longer evidence that the author has something to say worth the hearing; it only means that there is another book for *sale*. And although we have a large number of reviewers who are supposed to guide us in our choice of books, it is hardly safe to trust entirely to the judgment of these writers, unless we know something about their qualifications for their work. If the choice of books to read is a difficulty to grown up people whose time is limited, it becomes a greater difficulty to those who wish to provide healthy literature for their

children. Besides the healthiness of a book, its suitability to the age of the reader has also to be considered. Four books, published by the *Sunday School Association* within the last year, possess just those qualities which should distinguish books meant for young folks. Their tone is healthy; there is no "goodiness" about them; they are likely to interest as well as instruct young readers. But they are meant for children of different ages. And we will take first a book for little ones who have just learned to read. It is entitled *New Parables and Stories* by David Macrae. It consists of some thirty short stories, printed in good bold type. Each story is meant to convey a lesson, but the lesson might easily be missed by children who would delight in the story for its own sake. This feature leaves room for any instruction the elders may be pleased to give and allows parent or teacher to bring out the lesson in his or her own way. We can heartily recommend the book.—The next is *Jesus: The Story of His Life*," by the Misses Gregg. This is the first life of Jesus, written for young children, with which we are acquainted, that is free from objectionable elements. There is no attempt to do more than tell in the simplest words the story of the human Jesus. Most of those who write about Christ for little folks strive to get some of their own ideas about Him into the narrative; a detestable practice in our opinion. Nothing of the kind is attempted in this little book and we hope it will have a large sale. —Children a little older would enjoy reading *The Story of Bishop Colenso*, by Miss Florence Gregg. The life of the good and honest Bishop is fascinating as here told. Possibly one or two of the later chapters might need a little explanation from seniors, for children would not understand the bigotry and wickedness which troubled Colenso for so many years and at last killed him. Miss Gregg, however, confines herself to the simple narration of facts, and we fancy the young people who read her book will be grateful to her.—The fourth book is suitable for those who are approaching manhood or womanhood. Indeed, adult readers, who have found Browning difficult to understand, might read *Studies of Robert Browning's Poems*, by the Rev. Frank Walters, with interest and profit. Mr. Walters does not deal with all the poems, but his exposition will show that Browning was not always unintelligible, that he had a real message to deliver to his generation. And those who have any wish to know what Browning's message was cannot do better than send for this book.

The Midland Christian Union.

THE ANNUAL MEETINGS IN BIRMINGHAM.

THE Annual Meetings of the Midland Christian Union and Provincial Assembly were held in Birmingham, on Monday, the 20th of March, and were unprecedently successful. The appeal which the Committee made that the Liberal Christian Churches in Birmingham should co-operate to accord a hearty welcome to visitors from the country churches was readily answered; and since the Triennial Conference met in this city, eight years ago, no greater stimulus has been given to the work of the Liberal Christian Churches in and around Birmingham. A new feature in the day's proceedings was a public meeting in the Town Hall, which the Committee thought might awaken more widespread interest in the doings of the Union. The orders of the day consisted in a meeting of delegates, a luncheon, a service, and the public meeting already mentioned. The meeting of the delegates from the various churches forming the Midland Christian Union was held in the morning at the Church of the Messiah, Broad Street. The Union was fully represented, and the Rev. Joseph Wood presided. The Annual Report was read and approved, and the officers for the new year were elected.

On the motion of the Chairman, a resolution pledging the Union to a movement for church extension in the suburbs of Birmingham, was agreed to.

On the motion of Dr. Crosskey, a resolution was passed protesting against the attempt now being made on the London School Board, in the House of Lords, and in other quarters, authoritatively to introduce definite doctrinal teaching into the Board Schools of the country.

SPEECHES AT THE LUNCHEON.

At the conclusion of this, the Business Meeting of the Conference, the ministers, delegates, and visitors, were, by the hospitality of the Committee of the Church of the Messiah, entertained at a luncheon at the Grand Hotel. Dr Crosskey occupied the chair, among the visitors being Mr. Alderman Taylor (London County Council), Mr. J. Beard (of Manchester), Revds. W. Copeland Bowie, and W. G. Tarrant (of London).

After the repast, DR. CROSSKEY offered the most cordial welcome to the representatives of the Union, and especially to the delegates of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. He welcomed his friends from the district because he could assure them that it was the strongest desire of those in Birmingham that they should

be as one people, that the weakest church should feel allied with the strongest, and that they should all render to one another the most effective help, thus cementing that Christian fellowship that is one of the chief delights of life. He was glad of the opportunity of expressing their confidence in the British and Foreign Association. Having served, although imperfectly, as its President for one year, he had had many opportunities of examining and understanding its administrative work. The work was carried on with the most admirable vigour, the most unflagging zeal, and a large sacrifice of thought and time. We often largely exaggerated the extent to which the liberality of modern times extends. We met a few friends who sympathised with us, but there was a great power against us, which, in many directions, was a growing power. Ceremonial religion and sectarianism were putting out their arms and striving to enlarge their boundaries, and it was no time that we should relax our energies but that they should be strengthened and increased in every direction—(applause). That little escapade of the London School Board—for he did not think that it needed a more dignified title—was a sign of the times. There was a deliberate and consistent and persistent attempt to sap the foundation of Free Education in England, and assert again ecclesiastical authority and strengthen the ecclesiastical sway upon the people of this community—(loud applause).

ALDERMAN TAYLOR and the REV. W. G. TARRANT responded.

A vote of thanks to the Committee of the Church of the Messiah concluded the proceedings.

DR. BROOKE HERFORD ON "REAL RELIGIOUS PROGRESS."

In the afternoon, the REV. J. CROSSKEY conducted a religious service at the Church of the Messiah, and the REV. DR. BROOKE HERFORD delivered a sermon on "Real Religious Progress," the congregation quite filling the spacious church.

DR. HERFORD, taking as his text the first verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews, said: We hear a great deal in the present day about progressive religion. It was worth considering what real religious progress is. Of course, everyone admitted that progress was good. It is an age of progress: progress is in the very air, in a hundred things which touch close upon our life. "No finality" is the cry. The spirit has, naturally enough, spread to religion. Surely religion was also to share in this onward movement? Indeed it had done so. Even the great Church itself, that boasts it is always and everywhere the same, had taken some steps forward at least in some places. We look along the centuries, and reformation after reformation marks the steady gain of man. Already there are some who look for further advance in religion, feeling an uncertainty even about the most fundamental things in religion, doubting whether there is to be anything sure, solid, permanent, for the soul to rest in. But progress is not perpetual unrest. There has been progress in finding out the deep, inner principle of things; but there came a point in every branch of knowledge where the deep principle is found, and thenceforward progress is merely in the understanding and application of the principle. In mathematics no one feels impatient because we are using the same geometry which was compiled by Professor Euclid, of the Alexandrine schools 300 years B.C. Homer and Shakspeare still stand as the two matchless poets of the world. In painting we do not get much further than Raphael. In sculpture the Greeks are still our teachers; and as for architecture, our noblest skill follows but lamely the lines laid down by old Athenian or Corinthian architects, or makes fresh adaptations of the rich forms and traceries of the great Gothic style. In morals and religion the great verities had long been discerned, and the chief progress was not from that to something else, but in that—in their realisation and application. There could be no more any new religious truth than any new arithmetical truth. Moreover, the Reformation, the Methodist movement, and Unitarianism were all endeavours to go down to the old foundations of faith. We need, then, to have more feeling of rest and settlement, and to free ourselves from that vague impression, caught from the restless movement of the age, that everything is changing and passing—religion with the rest. The faith in God, in immortality, in beauty, in prayer, and in that great Christ who made all things so real—these things, said Dr. Herford, have all been questioned in our time, and investigated as never before, but still stand firm. Let men stay by these foundations and build on them. The question of scepticism used to be whether it was not time to leave Christianity behind as a spent ideal. The strongest note of it in these last days, sounded with a new intensity of poetic passion, is whether it is not so lofty an ideal as to have always been a mere delusive mockery for human hope. He affirmed, as a matter of fact, that it has done and is doing so much already that those who have unconsciously learned its higher thoughts of what the world may be are passionately disappointed that it has not done more. It stands the one force in history which keeps the best hopes of men fixed on a nobler world. From generation to generation we may trace mankind advancing in its life, and advancing still faster in its thought than in its life.

THE PUBLIC MEETING IN THE TOWN HALL.

In the evening a public meeting was held in the Town Hall, and there was a large attendance. Dr. PRIESTLEY SMITH presided in the absence through ill health of Alderman Sir Thomas Martineau, and amongst those present were the Revs. Dr. Brooke Herford, W. Copeland Bowie, W. G. Tarrant (London), C. Hargrove (Leeds), E. Myers (Shrewsbury), A. W. Timmis (Stourbridge), J. Harrison West Bromwich), E. D. P. Evans (Kidderminster), J. W. Lake (Warwick), G. E Evens Whitchurch), B. Davis (Evesham), Dr. Crosskey, J. Wood, J. C. Street, and J. Crossley; Messrs. J. R. Beard (president of the Provincial Assemblies of Lancashire and Cheshire), Taylor (British and Foreign Unitarian Association), R. Peyton, C. Harding, E. Townley, H. Weir, jun., and H. J Sayer.

The CHAIRMAN gave a very hearty welcome to the many visitors and friends who were present, and especially to Dr. Brooke Herford. The Midland Christian

Union, he said, was a voluntary association of Free Christian, Unitarian, Presbyterian, as some were still called, and other so-called non-subscribing congregations centred throughout the Midland district, and its object was to help to promote mutual interest and sympathy, mutual encouragement, and mutual support. If the work was to go forward we must regard ourselves no longer as non-subscribing members, but must cut off the prefix, and act more than we have done up to the altered circumstances—(hear, hear).—The Rev. J. WOOD said that it had been thought well that the first resolution dealing as it did with the crying need for Church Extension in Birmingham and its suburbs should be proposed by a local man having some knowledge of the facts. He had been asked, if he could, to strike the key-note of that meeting. The union was above everything else a home missionary society. That was the chief reason for its existence. More than half the income of the union came from Birmingham, but the union had never done a stroke of work for Birmingham. All its energies had been directed to the churches of the neighbourhood. The noble mission work done in Birmingham had been done by the local churches. But now the necessities of the case were so great that the time had come to extend their operations, and to call in the union to help them to answer to the greater needs of the time in which they lived. Circumstances had arisen which had suggested to the committee that it was time for them to be up and doing, and one thing in point was the census which had recently been taken. That census revealed a state of things which was perfectly appalling. Forty years ago the population of Birmingham was 232,000, to-day it was 478,000; forty years ago there were in attendance in all places of worship in Birmingham, morning, afternoon, and evening, 83,900 people, or only 36 per cent. of the population; last year when the census was taken the attendance at the Art Gallery, Free Library, Sunday-evening lectures, Sunday morning schools, and all the churches and chapels was 136,000, or 28 per cent. of the population; so that there had been a steady decline during the forty years in the church attendances, and especially when they took into consideration the increase of the population. Forty years ago there were in attendance on Sunday morning alone 43,500 people, at the end of 1892 there were 44,393 an increase in the four decades of only 900 with the addition to the population of more than a quarter of a million. That single fact struck some of them as very appalling. But that did not show the matter in its worst light. In St. Bartholomew's Ward, with a population of 25,600, only 435 persons were in all the churches and chapels on the day that the census was taken last year. In Saltley, with a population of 24,500 people, there were only 780 in attendance at church or chapel; and in Nechells, with a population of 32,000 there were only 200 persons to be found in all the places of worship. It was not easy to over colour this picture—(hear, hear). We ought to be disturbed by the absence of so large a number of people from church. Another reason why we should be up and doing was that the Nonconformist Council had proposed to map out the town with the view of getting hold of non-church goers, irrespective of all sectarian and denominational considerations. That was an admirable idea if properly carried out; but when it came to the pinch, they knew what happened. Every other nonconforming body was invited to co-operate except their own, and we were excluded distinctly on doctrinal grounds. That was not all. It appeared that while no attempt in this effort was to be made to proselytise—even the Roman Catholics were to be advised to go to mass—their people were to be regarded as fair game for the proselytisers—for the question was distinctly asked in the newspapers, whether the same tolerance was to be extended to Unitarians as to Roman Catholics. To that question, however, no answer had been given. What were they to conclude from that? One thing only—that while the particular tenets of every other Church were to be respected, ours were to be denounced—(shame)—and our Sunday school children and our poorer friends warned of the danger of attending our ministrations—(shame). A more monstrous exhibition of narrowness and intolerance it would be difficult to find at the end of the nineteenth century—(loud applause). When we remembered this—that it was a fact that it was some of their Quaker friends who were at the head of this intolerant movement—men with whom they had stood shoulder to shoulder in the past in the battle for religious liberty—we were compelled to exclaim "Et tu, Brute?" We were told that we might co-operate with them in the name of Sir Wilfred Lawson on behalf of temperance, in the name of Mr. Stead on behalf of social purity; but we could not co-operate with them in the name of Jesus of Nazareth on behalf of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Now, we did not wish to stand by ourselves in the doing of Christian work, still less in standing alone did we wish to have to fight for our own hand; but if we were driven to take up this position, let us give a good account of ourselves—(applause)—and if we were to give a good account of ourselves, then down with the cash—(laughter, and hear, hear). He moved, "That this meeting records with satisfaction that the Executive Committee are prepared to take steps towards a movement for Church Extension in the district, and cordially endorses the appeal of the Committee for an enlarged subscription-list to enable the work to be put in hand at once."

MR. T. R. BEARD seconded the motion.

DR. BROOKE HERFORD, speaking in support of the motion, said that, after all, it did not hurt them to be shut out of conferences, and he would venture to assert that there was not one man of all those who could not work with them as Christians who would not admit that in a sort of fashion they were Christians. The time was when they used to be shut out of heaven. He was glad to see that cartoon upon the wall (a cartoon of Priestley). He was glad to see that Birmingham remembered that notable passage of its early history. A spirit of enquiry was good, and nobody but those who went among people knew how widely spread that spirit of enquiry was. But, he said, it is not right to make people discontented with the churches about them, unless we find them something in its place. He did not believe in isolated Liberalism, which was simply stopping at home and going nowhere. He did not believe in Liberalism keeping to itself, and looking with a sort of scowl of contempt upon the people worshipping around—(hear, hear). Liberalism, if left to itself, was apt to sour into a very poor

quality of solitary and unhelpful thought. What we have to do is not merely to make men Liberals but to try to gather them into some Church life, not only that they might help the Church, but because it would be good for their own souls and for the spiritual life of the country for all that dissatisfied Liberalism to be gathered into one Church. He knew many men, who attended many churches, who yet said to him, "Well, I guess I am pretty much of a Unitarian." Freer thought, and the manner in which the Press encouraged a spirit of enquiry were making Liberals, and we must see that they do not become isolated, sour Liberals. While a score of different influences are detaching people from their churches, it rests with us alone to find them a larger life, in which they shall be free to have these greater thoughts about God, and Man, and Heaven. It is hard that we should have to do it, but we must do it. If we had to ship our exiles to America, in order that they might worship free, it would cost a sum one-tenth of which would do everything that was now necessary. We have to do this thing earnestly, and thoroughly, and well. Let him give a hint from America:—Do the thing on a little larger scale. He wanted to see the work done with a large, helpful spirit; it would not hurt them; there would not be any great self-sacrifice; and it would make a difference to the workers in the district, and help them to carry on the Lord's work in the spirit of him, the Saviour and the Master of us, from whom we learnt it—(loud applause). The motion was agreed to unanimously.

The REV. W. COPELAND BOWIE moved: "That this meeting records with thankfulness its appreciation of the excellent work done by the aided and mission churches of the Midlands during the past year, and commends them to the sympathy and support of all friends of Liberal Christianity." In the course of an eloquent speech Mr. Bowie said we must prepare to work hard and to think hard and make great sacrifices of time and of labour or we should fail, as we deserved to fail, in our work. Few of our people realised how hard many a devoted clergy and laity of other churches worked to impress what they believed to be true upon other men. It is only by tremendous hard work, by great self-sacrifice, by downright devotion of what is highest and best in our lives that we could succeed in establishing a religious society worth the name in these days of ours—(applause). We have a great and glorious work before us. What is higher, what is nobler, than to fill men's minds with the greatest thoughts, their hearts with the purest feelings, and their souls with the holiest aspirations?—The Rev. CHARLES HARGROVE seconded the resolution, which was carried.

Dr. CROSSKEY moved a vote of thanks to the Chairman, the Rev. Dr. Brooke Herford, and other visitors for their attendance and their services. The motion was carried, and the meeting closed with the Benediction.

During the evening a choir of 200 voices, under the direction of Mr. Astley Langston, sang two anthems, and several hymns were also sung; Mr. A. J. Cotton accompanying on the organ.

A collection was also taken, and an appeal for new and enlarged subscriptions made. The results are given below.

IN RESPONSE TO THE SPECIAL APPEAL for increased subscriptions made at the Annual Meeting on 20th March, 1893, the following amounts have been promised.—Further contributions will be gladly received by the Treasurer, Mr. Worthington, Old Swinford, Stourbridge, or by the President, Rev. Joseph Wood, 120, Gough Road, Birmingham.—

	£	s.	d.
Collected at the Morning Meeting	14	3	6½
,, ,, Evening Meeting	26	15	11

BIRMINGHAM.	Don'tion. £	s.	d.	Sub'tion. £	s.	d.
Josiah Baker				0	5	0
John Stych	1	0	0	0	10	0
Joseph Cooper				0	10	0
Mrs. J. H. Forrester				0	5	0
Mrs. Griffiths				0	5	0
Miss Griffiths	0	5	0			
A. A. Charlesworth				2	2	0
Rev. T. Pipe				0	10	0
Rev. J. C. Street				0	10	0
Miss Dora H. Smith				0	3	0
Allen Edwards				0	10	0
Rev. J. Crossley				0	10	0
C. Booth				5	0	0
T. H. Russell				0	10	6
W. H. Nightingale, increased from 15s. to				2	0	0
E. L. Tyndall, increased from 5s. to				0	10	6
Priestley Smith				1	1	0
Rev. W. J. Clarke				0	5	0
Miss L. A. Russell				0	5	0
Miss E. Ryland				0	10	0
Mrs. Peyton				1	1	0
T. N. Tait				0	5	0
H. Norcombe				0	10	6
Mrs Lamplugh				1	1	0
Miss M. C. Gittins				0	10	0
Miss Whitfield				0	2	6
Mrs. G. S. Mathews				1	0	0
P. T. W. Hatton				0	5	0
Miss Isaacs				0	5	0
T. W. Ware				0	1	0
Mrs. P. S. Wright				0	5	0
A. Shakespeare				0	2	6
J. Sutton				0	5	0
Mrs. William Stych				0	2	6
Miss M. C. Smith				0	5	0
John Innes				1	0	0
John A. Grew				0	5	0
Miss Ellen Russell				0	5	0
Mrs. M. E. Russell				0	10	0
William Unite				0	5	0
J. E. Harrison				0	2	6
Alfred Gough				0	10	0
Miss M. S. Butler				0	2	6
W. J. Cross, increased from 10s. 6d. to				1	1	0
P. Narborough				1	0	0
H. S. Smith				3	3	0
George Hatton				0	10	6
F. W. Lloyd				0	10	0
Owen Hopkins				0	10	0
E. H. Martindale				0	2	6
W. Grainger				0	2	6

	Don'tion. £ s. d.	Sub'tion. £ s. d.
T. W. Ryland		1 1 0
William Cheshire		0 10 6
Miss M. H. Smith		0 2 6
Miss L. Matthews		0 2 6
F. S. Goode		0 10 0
Rev. J. Wood, increased from 10s. 6d. to		1 1 0
E. E. Dendy		0 7 6
C. Harding, increased from £1 1s. to		5 5 0
Miss Dowsing		0 5 0
George Titterton...	0 10 0	
H. J. Sayer	0 10 6	
Miss V. Green	0 5 0	
Miss Florence Dowson	0 2 6	
E. H. Martindale	0 2 6	
James W. Russell		0 5 0
CRADLEY.		
Charles Homer		0 2 0
Mrs. Evers	3 0 0	
DUDLEY.		
G. Thompson		1 0 0
EVESHAM.		
Rev. D. Davis, increased from 5s. to		0 10 0
HEREFORD.		
B. Ronalds		0 5 0
KIDDERMINSTER.		
Rev. E. D. Priestley Evans ...		1 1 0
Miss Selina Stooke		1 1 0
A. Hopkins, increased from 5s. to		1 1 0
George Haycock...		0 5 0
Miss E. Cowell		0 2 6
B. Arnold		0 2 0
W. Winbury		0 5 0
KINGSWOOD.		
Rev. J. H. Matthews		0 10 0
LOUGHBOROUGH.		
H. E. Haycock		0 5 0
LYE.		
Rev. J. Wrigley		0 5 0
OLDBURY.		
A. E. Morgan		0 5 0
SHREWSBURY.		
Rev. E. Myers, increased from 5s. to		0 10 0
Mrs. Vickery		0 2 6
STOURBRIDGE.		
Mrs. A. W. Worthington ...		1 1 0
Miss Evers	1 1 0	
TAMWORTH.		
Mrs. Howard		0 5 0
F. Alldritt	0 5 0	
WALSALL.		
Rev. P. Dean		0 15 0
WEST BROMWICH.		
W. S. Watts		0 10 6
T. E. Haycock		0 2 6
WHITCHURCH.		
Rev. G. E. Evans		0 2 6
WOLVERHAMPTON.		
H. E. Perry, increased from 5s. to		0 10 0

News from the Field.

ARCHDEACON FARRAR tells us in the new number of *The Review of the Churches*, that no Church paper ever enters his home They are, he says, so full of controversies and phases of antagonism, which he regards as ignoble. What a comment on the dust and noise of the so-called "religious" journals of the Established Church.

DR. CLIFFORD occupies a conspicuous place in the same magazine.—In an interview with the Reviewer, the up-to-date Doctor said, "The quickening of the Social conscience is the most hopeful sign of the times. Forty years ago there was no Social conscience. Christianity is to-day an instrument of Social regeneration. Whereas a generation ago the aspect of Christianity most dominant was that in which it was represented as a getting rid of personal evil."

THE GUILD MOVEMENT has come in for a silly attack on the part of some correspondents of the *Inquirer*. When will it be understood that unless our churches are free enough to try experiments without being reproached either for conservatism or revolutionery rashness, and wide enough to admit of great differences of thought and practice, they have no right to be called Liberal at all? Unless we can show that unity in diversity is quite practicable we are no more Liberal than our neighbours.

A NONCONFORMISTS COUNCIL for Birmingham, from which the Unitarians of Birmingham are excluded, is a ridiculous as well as a bigoted proposal. Seeing that the Old Meeting and the Church of the Messiah are the two oldest Nonconformist churches in the town, and remembering their services and sufferings in the past, to say nothing of their position in the present, the attempt to boycott them on doctrinal grounds is a little too strong even for many orthodox stomachs. It shows, however, how skin-deep only is much of the boasted toleration of our day. That enlightened newspaper *The Christian World* notes the protest made by our ministers with approval.

HURST STREET MISSION.—We have much pleasure in calling attention to the Anniversary Services of this mission, which are to be held on Sunday and Tuesday, April 16 and 18. Sermons will be preached on Sunday, April 16, at the Old Meeting Church, by the Rev. A. Hood, of Brighton. The Annual Meeting of Subscribers will be held on Tuesday evening, April 18th, in the Hurst Street Chapel.

WHITCHURCH.—An interesting service was held last month, when the Rev. T. Gosquoine, B.A., Congregational Minister of Bedford, preached to a large congregation.

Men ask, what have you got? what do you know? what can you do? God asks, what are you?—*M. J. Savage.*

Notes of Sunday School Lessons.

FROM "THE EPIC OF HADES."

SUNDAY, APRIL 2ND.

TANTALUS, THE LOVER OF PLEASURE.

(Read: Ecclesiastes ii., v. 1-23; Luke xv., v. 11-20.)

Of all forms of selfishness, that of the lover of pleasure is the most despicable. In the pursuit of wealth or of popular applause there may be redeeming qualities, not so in this.

In Ecclesiastes, the debater gives us a picture of the man who lives for himself. He tells us what is the outcome of a life of pleasure. It results in utter weariness. "His heart taketh not rest in the right." Satiety sets in.

In Luke, we have the same lesson. The prodigal inevitably spends all and begins to be in want.

Such, too, is the lesson taught by Lewis Morris in his version of the history of Tantalus. Tantalus is to him the voluptuary, who yields to every desire.

From Tantalus we get our word "tantalise," because, according to the story, he "was made to stand up to his chin in water, with branches of fruit hung over his head, the water receding when he wished to drink, and the fruit when he desired to eat." Such was said to be his punishment in the under-world.

Tantalus was an Eastern Prince, whose every wish was gratified. Troops of flatterers surrounded him and sought to minister to every sense. And for a while it was sweet to plunge in these youthful pleasures and to lose oneself in a sea of unutterable delight. But at last swift desire grew tyrannous. The old pleasures ceased to interest him, and in the pursuit of ever new pleasures he sought rest, but found it not. "Always craving, never quenched—The undying curse of the soul."

Already on earth had his punishment begun.

Love of pleasure led to crime, until at last it ended in the murder of his child, his best beloved. Then, for the first time, he realised the enormity of his sin.

The poet urges us to cultivate self-control, and thus gain happiness.

> "We are ourselves
> Our heaven and hell, the joy, the penalty,
> The yearning, the fruition."

SUNDAY, APRIL 9TH.

PHAEDRA; OR THE REMORSE OF CONSCIENCE.

(Read: Genesis xlii., v. 3-22; Matthew xxvii., v. 3-5; and Philippians iii., v. 13, 14.)

Penitence is such sorrow for past sin as leads to amendment of life. Repentance is the burden of the preaching of Jesus and of John.

Remorse is a stronger, more exaggerated form of the same feeling. Darwin considers ("Descent of Man," pt. 1, ch. 4) that it bears the same relation to repentance as rage does to anger, or agony to pain.

The peculiarity of remorse is its hopelessness. The repentant man will "leave the things that are behind" and press on to better things in time to come. The remorseful man cannot leave the things that are behind. The thought of the past haunts him incessantly, and deadens all aspiration.

And yet remorse is a sign of life. It is far better than not to grieve at all.

So regarded Richard III., Lady Macbeth, Judas Iscariot are all to be preferred to Jay Gould, the relentless. Mention in this connection "The Ballad of Judas Iscariot," by Robert Buchanan.

Phaedra like Guinevere has been sent to marry a king far away. She is young, whereas the king is old. It is a loveless marriage, a marriage of convenience, like so many made by royal and non-royal personages.

The king's son is about the same age as herself. She cannot love the father, but with the force of her whole being loves the son.

By and by she gains the son's love and elopement is resolved on, from which project, however, he speedily withdraws because he "dare not do this wrong."

In revenge, Phaedra accuses him to the father, he is put to death—in remorse Phaedra hangs herself. The thought of his dying face maddens her.

There is no escape through suicide, but through duty and through a Father's forgiving love. Remember, if we have done wrong—

> Our place is kept, and it will wait,
> Ready for us to fill it, soon or late:
> No star is ever lost we once have seen,
> We always may be what we might have been.

SUNDAY, APRIL 16TH.

MARSYAS, OR THE DUTY OF AIMING HIGH THOUGH SEEMING FAILURE BE THE RESULT.

(Read 1 Kings xix., v. 9-18; Matthew xxvii., v. 39-50; Acts vii., v. 57 60; Matthew v., 48.)

Elijah was the champion of a purer faith than that of the orthodox of his day. He counted himself to have failed, but bravely struggled on, and left behind him memories that were themselves the earnest of victory.

Jesus thought God had forsaken him, and all hope seemed lost. Yet the cross was but the beginning of his victory. Stephen spoke truths hard to receive, and his tongue was silenced in death. There seemed no other who could so adequately preach the gospel of comprehension; yet there was one who remembered his words, and Paul came, a greater than he.

The story of Marsyas, as usually told, is merely intended as a warning against pride, but Lewis Morris gives it a nobler meaning, and makes it teach the duty of lofty endeavour.

Marsyas discovers the flute, and for love thereof leaves all. He is for his art—nought else. Soon his fame spreads over all the land, and so, overbold, he dares to challenge to a contest Phœbus himself. The result was failure, and yet he had heard the voice of his conqueror and was satisfied. He says, "I felt no pang of fear, only deep joy that I had heard such music while I lived, even though it brought torture and death. For what were it to lie, sleep, crowned with roses, drinking vulgar praise, and surfeited with offerings, the dull gift of ignorant hands—all which I might have known—to this diviner failure? . . . . . More it is than ease, palace, and pomp, honours and luxuries, to have seen white Presences upon the hills, to have heard the voice of the Eternal Gods."

Translate that into prose. Does it not teach the duty and the blessing of aiming morally high? Thus do we see white Presence and hear the voice of God. Be perfect, then, as the Father is. Like the chambered nautilus—

"Build thee more stately mansions,
O my soul! as the swift seasons roll."

SUNDAY, APRIL 23RD.

ANDROMEDA, OR THE LAW OF SOLIDARITY.

(Read: Psalm lxxxii.; Matthew xiii., v. 24-30; John xvii., v. 15-18; Romans v. xiv., 7.)

"No man liveth to himself." He rubs shoulders with all kinds of people. He can never say, "I am alone." A thousand forces are acting upon him, and he in turn acts upon others. The good King shall bless not Israel alone, but all nations. The stone thrown into the pond causes not one circle only, but many, that spread wider and wider till the extreme edge of the pool he reached. Even so we cannot confine our work within a given limit.

No life worth having can be gained by us if we live haughtily apart, unsympathetic. The facts of life teach us that brotherhood, frankly accepted, is the best for all. Point out the consequences of all this? The clothes of a prince may be made in a fever-stricken den. Let this law then teach us our responsibility and our duty. Be healthy, cheerful, loving, and you shall import health, cheerfulness, love.

Andromeda is the daughter of the King of Ethiopia, whose dominions are laid waste by a monster. The princess sees the people's misery. Homes wrecked, flocks of herds slaughtered, grain destroyed, many lives lost. Then Andromeda is told that if she is given up to the monster, there will come deliverance. She submits, is chained to the rock, but is rescued by Perseus, who becomes her lover and her husband.

Of such as Andromeda, it may be said, "Evermore for sacrifice they die, through sacrifice they live, and are for others, and no grief which smites the humblest but, reverberates through all the close-set files of life, and takes the princely soul, that from its royal towers looks down and sees the sorrow."

Close by quoting Fiske, to show how salvation comes to the parent and to the race through the helplessness of infancy.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

How the Winter Fire Came to be Put Out.

A PARABLE.

BY DAVID MACRAE.

A man came to this country in the winter time, from a land where it was always warm.

When he reached the home of the friends with whom he had come to stay, the air was thick with drifting snow, and the wind was bitterly cold. The stranger sat close to the fire, with a thick shawl over his shoulders, and could not be persuaded to go out.

"I hope," he said anxiously, "I hope you have always plenty of coal here, to keep the fire burning."

"Oh, yes, we have plenty of coal," said his friends, with a smile, "but in six months after this, all the fires will be put out, and the windows will be open half the day."

"Then," said the stranger, "I shall perish. I could not exist here for a single day without fire."

But, after a few months, spring and summer came. The snows all melted away; the earth turned green; the flowers came out; the skies were beautiful and blue; and the air was balmy and warm.

And the stranger, who thought he could never live in this country except sitting close to a fire, had the fire put out; threw off his thick plaid; and wandered away with the children into the summer woods. Even when in the house, he delighted to sit with the windows wide open, that he might enjoy the warm sunshine and the balmy air.

So is it when one's heart warms with love to God and love to man. Selfish indulgences, without which he thought life would be miserable, lose their attractions. He not only puts them aside, he never misses them. His heart fills with new and higher joys. He has begun to live in the balmy summer of the soul.

Little Girls.

What can little girls do,
  Even if they could?
Oh! if we were grown-up men,
  Wouldn't we be good!
Wouldn't we kill dragons?
  Wouldn't we make laws?
Nobody should run in debt,
  No one lose a cause;
We would turn the prisons
  Into houses grand,
Where the poor should eat and drink
  Till they could not stand.
We would make the convents
  Regions of romance;
All the nuns should marry quick,
  And be taught to dance.
    What can little girls do,
      Even if they would?
    Oh! if we were grown-up men,
      Wouldn't we be good.

There should be no money,
  Then there'd be no loss—
Never any little bills
  To make people cross;
We would give each creature
  That for which he longs;
We would burn the lesson books,
  And write heaps of songs.
In the poorest cottage
  Fires should blaze so high;
Nobody should work too much—
  Nobody should cry.
    What can little girls do, etc., etc.

There should be no smoking—
  'Tis a great abuse;
Grown-up men should keep their breath
  For a better use.
There should be no drinking,
  Only kettle-drums;
Grown-up men should never swear—
  Never bite their thumbs.
We'd have no attorneys,
  Only truth we'd seek;
And the rich should help the poor,
  And the strong the weak.
Nobody should quarrel,
  Or do things by half;
All the world should look alive—
  All the world should laugh.
    What can little girls do, etc., etc.

Midland Church Calendar for April.

ATHERSTONE: Unitarian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. J. Howard, of Tamworth. Service at 3 p.m.

BIRMINGHAM: Church of the Messiah, Broad Street.
Ministers: Revs. Dr. Crosskey, 117, Gough Road; and James Crossley, 5, Wyndham Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

BIRMINGHAM: The Hurst Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. W. J. Clarke, 160, Pershore Road.
Services: 10-15, 2-45, and 6-30.
Special: Annual Meeting on Tuesday, April 18th, in Chapel.

BIRMINGHAM: The Fazeley Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. T. Pipe, 59, Gt Brook Street. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Musical Service, Sunday Evening, April 16th.

BIRMINGHAM: The Newhall Hill Church.
Minister: Rev. A. A. Charlesworth, Claremont Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: April 2nd, Easter Carols. May 7th, Sunday School Sermons; May 8th, Sunday School Annual Tea and Meeting.

BIRMINGHAM: The Old Meeting Church.
Minister: Rev. Joseph Wood, 120, Gough Road, Edgbaston. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Annual Sermons and Collections, for Hurst Street Mission, Sunday, April 16.

BIRMINGHAM: The Church of the Saviour.
Minister: The Rev. J. C. Street, 19, Charlotte Road, Edgbaston
Services: 11 and 6-30.

BANBURY: Christ Church, Horsefair.
Minister: Rev. H. Hill. Service: Evening, 6-30.
Special: April 2nd, "Science and Immortality." April 16th, "A False Ambition." April 30th, "Strength through Weakness."

COSELEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. Henry Eachus. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

CRADLEY: Netherend Chapel.
Minister: Rev. A. E. O'Connor. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: April 4th, Minister's Meeting at 3-15.

DUDLEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Vacant. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

EVESHAM: Oak Street Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. M. S. Dunbar, M.A., 9, Albert Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

Midland Church Calendar for April.—*(Continued.)*

KIDDERMINSTER :
Minister : Rev. E. D. Priestley Evans. Services : 10-30 and 6-30.
Special :

KINGSWOOD : Kingswood Chapel, Hollywood.
Minister : Rev. J. Hardinge Matthews. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

OLDBURY : Unitarian Meeting House.
Minister : Rev. Henry McKean, The Dingle, Oldbury. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

SHREWSBURY : High Street Church.
Minister : Rev. E. Myers, F.G.S., Claremont Hill. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

STOURBRIDGE : Presbyterian Chapel.
Minister : Rev. A. W. Timmis. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

TAMWORTH : Cole Hill Chapel.
Minister : Rev. J. Howard, 17, Aldergate. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

THE LYE : Unitarian Chapel.
Minister : Rev. I. Wrigley, B.A. Service : 6-30.
Special :

WALSALL : Unitarian Free Church.
Minister : Rev. Peter Dean, 3, Sandwell Street. Services : 11-15 and 6-30.
Special :

WEST BROMWICH : Lodge Road Chapel.
Minister : Rev. John Harrison, Jesson Street. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

WHITCHURCH : Church of the Saviour, Highgate.
Minister : Rev. George Eyre Evans, 5, Mill Street.
Services : 11, 2-15 for Children, 6-30.
Special : Church open daily for private prayer and rest.
April 23rd, Sunday School Sermons and Collections.

WOLVERHAMPTON : Unity Church, Snow Hill.
Minister : Rev. L. G. Harris Crook, Oaklands Road. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :